CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Project Palm Desert Historical Society

INTERVIEWEE: Nina Schumway OH3

INTERVIEWER: Patricia Young

SUBJECT: Oral History Project

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TRANSCRIBER: Dana Forrester

PY: Historical Society of Palm Desert, Oral History Project by Patricia Young at her home, 1947 Tacheva in Palm Springs on Friday, December 7, 1979, and it's 3:00 p.m. One of the first things that I wanted to ask you about was your years in Palm Desert, which are less well documented, I think, from the time you spent in Coachella and then up in the mountains, on the mountain. So, when did you move to Palm Desert?

NS: I moved there after I built the house, but I invested in the Desert Magazine first in a sense. Then after my husband passed Randall came to see me and we were friends of his, my husband and I, before he started the magazine even, but he told us he was going to start it, the magazine. He was in the newspaper business in Imperial Valley, and he said what he had in mind and he had written us a letter asking about a piece of land that at that time we had started to buy from the Southern Pacific that was up on the Santa Rosa Ridge in the high country.

A very, beautiful place. But we later sold that because we found that we couldn't use it after we had to take over the ranch when my father met with his automobile accident that was fatal, and we had to take the ranch over very quickly and we couldn't get away long enough at a time to use the high mountain country. So, Randall had written to see if he could be lease or rent a piece on which to have a cabin, a kind of a place to get away and out for awhile. So, we had gotten acquainted with him that way. Then he, after we were living on our mountain on our homestead, he came up there and I had written several articles for the magazine while it was still in El Centro, very new. Randall, of course, and Cliff, both were in the Army flying service, as you know, and Randall had lost his son in the war; and so, when he saw in the paper that my Steve was gone, why, he wrote me this long, lovely letter. And we followed it up quickly by a visit. I wasn't seeing anybody, but because of what he had said in his letter about his son, how he felt, and I agreed that I would see him if he came over. And so, after we had talked some little time--I was already preparing to move out of the old ranchhouse and to some improvised winter quarters that I was going to fix up on the Woodhouse Ranch where these friends that offered me a place, and it had an empty one room, well, it was really originally a bedroom for their uncle who used to come from Pomona, but it was detached and just a patio,

open patio, between it. And Burt Woodhouse agreed, if I'd pay my rent in advance, he would put in a bath and dressing room. And I had this little trailer house that Steve had bought for trips and we were going to just leave our duffel in that and go exploring. In those days we had no four-wheel drive, but we did have our car, our pick-up, fixed with axel and it was stripped down. We could get anywhere and he was a very good desert driver. So we never were interested in just following the highways. We always wanted to get back in the back country and investigate and explore. So, in view of the fact that we finally had begun to make money on the ranch due to war, tragic as that seems, it saved the date industry because then when we could no longer import fruit, and then they had sugar rationing, why, the price on dates began to go up and up. And Steve had kept the garden in just prime condition so that we had our own cold storage plant and our own grating and cleaning plant and everything there on the ranch. And a cold storage plant just full of the finest fruit, so we were already for this change and we started making money then. And it seemed to me it was...well, I was bitter about it in a way. First time I'd lost my immediate family and my own child without feeling like this, but it seemed to me so unbearable that just when he'd worked so awfully hard to do this and just when we got in the clear and he bought pack saddles for us to get back in

the mountains and all, then he was gone overnight. So, Randall understood all these things and he wanted to talk to me about some plan that he had and he thought it would be interesting to me and, perhaps, take me kind of out of myself and be comfort. So, he told me that he had saved some stock. They were going to have to re-organize after they moved to Palm Desert and started this new thing. Cliff was supposed to be in charge of the new subdivision, and Randall was going to move and build the magazine building and there was some land went with it on which they built some apartments that were just to be rented to the help in the magazine. They had never sold stock outside of the employees and one or two of Randall's family, Ella Henderson, who is now gone. And then there was another brother, Phil, that was interested but I never met him. I never knew him. He passed on before I ever met him. But Carl was in there and Carl sold me, the day that they had the grand opening for Palm Desert and sold lots, why, I had bought a lot just for an investment up near the Shadow Mountain Club. And, of course, the restrictions up there were too high for me. I didn't intend to build on it, but I was too naive to know that I was competing with the whole company (chuckle) and wouldn't ever sell it until there was a shortage of lots.

PY: Now, what do you mean there were too many restrictions?

NS: In building, size of the house. Up there in unit one,

which was close to the Shadow Mountain Club--it wasn't built yet, just the plans had been drawn and they were starting the grounds. But the building itself, it had all been planned but it hasn't been anything really done except the grounds and then the sale of the lots around. So, I had put this money into that and still living over at the Woodhouse Ranch, which was about ten miles farther and that added to my trip up the mountain, which I made, oh, even when I was not in residence up there, which I was seven months a year. Why, I was going and coming very often, two or three times a week because I had a kid fox up there that I kept feeding, feeding the birds, and I had a little packrat that lived under the big rock by the kitchen window and I fed him and he always looked for my coming too even in the winter. And I had at this time a very dear friend that everybody in the valley knows, Jane Walker. She was the librarian in the Indio public library for about twenty-three years and she loved the mountain just as I did. And I met her just after my husband passed. He always used to get the books and we had a very firm foundation in Jane's...but we, she and I, hadn't met. But Steve and Jane used to have conclaves about the books and he would bring them to me. So, I sort of inherited Jane and there never was a finer friendship than this because we...well, in most ways we were as opposite as we could be. We both had this consuming love of the earth and the mountains and the desert.

And so, we started then to explore together as much as we dared. We couldn't go out the way Steve and I did, but we would go as much as we dared. And we also started trips over to Arizona, the Indian country in Arizona, during her vacations. She had a month off every year. So, she started coming up to the mountain every weekend and then holidays and spending it up there with me. And we explored the mountain and hiked and got to know all the places that we loved to go back to. And she never moved from her old house in Indio, but I moved from the Woodhouse Ranch eventually. And I had a very wonderful experience, which I am telling in the book I'm working on, Mountain of Discovery. I don't want to repeat the things here.

PY: Sure. That's fine

NS: Well, I somehow can't just tell them off hand.

PY: I understand. What about where...

NS: They're very metaphysical experiences. Very deep experiences and the book itself is much different, although it is the sequel to Your Desert & Mine. It's more subjective, very much more, and also I tell the experiences because I can't do anything less than tell them. I had so many miracles and they were absolute miracles. In a way it seemed almost a miracle the way I got my Dune Drift place because, when I found that I couldn't sell that lot, then I began to think, "why didn't I do something within my means and reasonable and buy a lot over in

Palm Village", which at that time had started way before Palm Desert had started before the war. And the building restriction were very much more reasonable, and Anne Carpenter lived over there and a lot of people I knew lived over in Palm Village. And we started a little theater over there with Clay Sterns and all and he and Mary were very dear friends later. But I stopped in one day on my way to the mountain and I said to Carl who had sold me this lot, I just expressed the thought that I wished that I had done differently and had bought something that I could afford to build on so that I would be that much nearer the mountain. And he said, "Why don't you ask Cliff if he'll make a trade with you for two lots in unit four instead of the one lot in unit 1?" And he said, "They cost just about half as much and their restrictions are lower". And I said, "Oh, I don't suppose he'd ever do that". "Well" Carl said, "he might because he's very anxious to get people living here". And I had quite a bad illness about that time, but as soon as I was on my feet again, I wrote to Cliff and made this suggestion that Carl had made. And to my surprise, he agreed at once and said to stop and see Miss Ward, Edith Eddy Ward, who was his agent there for years and she was for many years--everybody in that part of the desert knew Edith Eddy Ward and her mother and her mother, of course, had been gone many years...she hasn't been gone so long. But she took me over there and showed

me these two lots. And, oh, to me they were infinitely nicer than the one I bought. I got so much better view of the pass, the two white mountains at the gateway, and my homestead, I could look right up and see the mountain right where it was, keep it always under my eye. And best of all, one of the lots had three smoke trees on it. One great, big, beautiful smoke tree, the most perfect that I'd ever seen, and then the two smaller ones. They were all on the east lot and then one between. And after Miss Ward left me...I said, "Well, I like the lots very much and I'll let you know that the restriction was that I start building at once". And I had in cash a very small sum of money, and the estate had been settled but I'd put the money into one or two other things. And I didn't know whether I'd have to get my finances straightened out before I could build. I thought, "Well, still I had a little over six thousand dollars in cash that was right ready that I could use". But I thought, "Well, I'll never be able to build on six thousand dollars". So, anyway, I resolved that I would make the trade, and she left me and I stood around there gloating over my fine acquisition, you know (laughter). Oh, I was delighted, was in my seventh heaven. And on the lot there was this smoke tree and then this open lot that had nothing but desert brush on, and then there were some men laying out, it looked like, laying out a new little house. And I had

seen one small adobe on the way over. I was firmly resolved to build an adobe. Our mountain house was adobe and I loved adobe and I felt that it was part of the earth and I wanted an adobe house. Well, Carl had tried to talk me out of that. He said "They're not as popular, they won't sell as well". I said, "I'm not thinking about selling, I'm thinking about living in it". "What I want is a place for my home for the winter and I'm not going to go by that." So, he helped me stake out after I got the lot, but a wonderful thing happened. The day that the magazine had the opening I had already invested in it and I was one of the hostesses for the opening, and I had met a man, been introduced to a Mr. Bolt from Redlands, who was a builder and we had talked and he told me that he was interested only really in adobe construction. And I began to ask him questions about the cost of building and he had said--he had given me a price which sounds fantascially low now. I think it was as I recall about ten dollars a square foot, but at that time I felt it was a little too high for me. I said I'd have to wait because, you see, war materials were still restricted, a lot of them, and so prices were still up. But this was a year later when I got the lot. Miss Ward and I had passed a street where there was a little adobe. I saw it out of...just glanced at it. They were laying out...just driving the stakes. And a man detached himself from this group of workmen and came strolling over while

I was standing there looking at my smoke tree and at my mountains and at the view and imagining how I would have this house and how it was going to be. And, low and behold, it was Mr. Bolt and he recognized me and I recognized him. And we began to talk at once, and he said that he had already finished a big adobe over in the club area, a very nice one. And he said one was just being completed, the one that I had seen in fact, a small adobe, one bedroom and bath and a fireplace it had. And he was just completing that and was laying out the lines for another adobe right there where the workmen were, but in this one he was going--well, in a 11 of them he said, except the one that he had finished...I don't know that that was sold already, but hte other two he had to wait for the money until they sold. He'd made an agreement with somebody to that effect that owned the lots. So, he said...and I said, "Well, I want to buy these". I said, "What could you built me a little adobe like the one you're just finishing, one bedroom, one bath?" "What would it cost?" And so he and did a little figuring and said, "Well, Ive just gotten out of the hospital after a long siege of stomach ulcers and I owe my men their salaries for way back, but this crew is a good adobe crew and I have a contract with one of the missions over on the coast that in June we are to move there and rehabilitate this mission, and I want to keep my adobe men, this crew that I have, and I have to keep

them going but I can just pay them a little along". He said, "If you could pay cash for everything just as we did it, why, I could give my men part of this and I'd build it a lot cheaper just so as to keep my crew together until we move over there in June". Now, this was along in, I guess it was in March or April.

PY: What year? March of what year?

NS: Of 1949.

PY: What kind of people composed his crew? You said he had this adobe crew. What kind of men were they?

NS: Well, they were just workmen, but they were used to working in adobe. They knew how to mix it, how to lay it. It's quite a different construction, you know. And so, of course, he had to hire plumbers and those kind of things for the...but the contractural construction of the walls and so on. And so, we talked about it and he said, "I believe that if you would do that, if you'll pay when the floor was again, then again when the walls were so high up to the window level, then up to the beam, so on, pay each time, I would do that for you for a little over six thousand dollars". I said, "Six thousand dollars!". To myself I said, "Oh, that's it, that's what I'm to do". I could see I was just being guided to get everything right at hand. And I said, "Done". "When will we talk about it?" "Well" he said "Could you be back tomorrow?" I said, "Yes, I'll be back anytime you say". And he had to drive clear down from

Redlands, so I knew I could get to Edith's office and make the deal then meet him down there. And that's what we did. And he said to save the architect fee, we could take the plan of the other little adobe that he was just finishing and make changes if I had to have them. I said, "Well, I didn't want a corner fireplace". And I wanted my living room larger. I wanted it clear across the front of the house with two big picture windows on each side of the fireplace and an outside chimney going up. And he said, "Well, a fireplace like that, we'd have to build a foundation from the ground up, you know". He said that'll cost more. "Well" I said, "it won't cost very much more, will it?" So, he figured and no, he said he could do it for--I've forgotten for how much more--but, anyway, the whole thing came within my means except one thing, and then when I said that I had to have a carport, bigger carport, and a larger washroom and storage that had to be on. "Well" he said, "that's going to make the house quite a bit larger and I'll have to charge you more". Well, then I remembered that I hadn't sold my Oldsmobile yet, that was secondhand that my husband had bought just before he passed, for me and had it all fixed up. I had put it up at a service station for sale. The man was to sell it when he could. And, of course, cars were very scarce after the war and I expected a very quick sale and a good fair price. And I had left it there for sale when I got this secondhand

Ford station wagon. It had a wood body, which I always had to keep varnished in order to keep it from creeking and all, but it was a very good machine and the engine and everything and mechanically it was fine. So, I said, "Well, I have a car that I'm trying to sell and maybe we can make some kind of a deal with that". "Oh" he said, "that would be a good idea because my wife and daughter are left, now that I'm on this desert job, takes me all day I'm here and they don't have any transportation. And he said, "If I could get a car very reasonable that they could use, well, either I could use it and they'd leave this larger car or vica versa". So, I said, "Well, go look at it, see what you think". But by that time I had visited this man who had had it for sale and I had found that it wasn't there. And when I inquired of the chap that was left in charge, he said, "Well, the boss drives your car everyday to Palm Springs so his wife can use their car". So, as soon as I got that good news (laughter), I called my nephew, Kenney, at the Mobile gas station here in Palm Springs and told him to pick up the car right away and put it in the best mechanical shape that it could be put in and put it out--there was plenty of room there at his service station, nothing was crowded in those days--and put a 'for sale' sign on it. So I said, "Stop at my nephew Kenney's Mobile gas station as you drive out of town and tell him who you are and what you're doing and ask him to let you see my car

and look it over". 'If you want to drive it you can, or whatever." So, he did that and he allowed me the amount on the car that I was deficient in for the other improvements I wanted for my house. So, everything was just working out just perfect, and I went right over to Miss Ward's and I was so excited and I'm a very...if I get to keying on something like I was on that smoke tree and my view, why, I don't really care much about anything else (laughter), and I didn't even notice...Miss Ward was a very fine businesswoman, expert, and a very shrewd lady. She knew all the ropes and just how to tend to everything, which I didn't know anything about like that. And I was a greenhorn. And I didn't even notice that (end side 1)

NS: ...my lot that I had bought up near the club area had cost me thirty-five hundred and these were only... well, they didn't both together amount to within about sixty dollars of the price of that. But I didn't even think about it until afterwards, and she charged me for all the different et ceteras, stamps, and so forth that you put on the papers. I paid cheerfully and I paid all the postage and everything. Oh, I went home so happy and so contented with everything and never really mentioned it to her or to anybody else because to me...why, the smoke tree, to me, is worth six, eight hundred, a thousand dollars, just priceless, that smoke tree to me. And it was the most beautiful thing,

and I never regreted it in the world. So, I was there every single day, and when they had the stakes in, then just the week before that, one of my nephews, Lee--he was next to the youngest of my brother's children--had just gotten out of the...he had been in the war in the marines. And he had joined with his mother's permission because he wouldn't go to school and he was crazy to join the marines. So, she had to sign for him because he was only about seventeen. But the war had sobered him up pretty well and made quite a man of him. He was entirely different. And he came to see me there at the Woodhouse Ranch in my little quarters and it was the first time I'd seen him since he was in the marines. And we had quite a talk. The first thing he said to me after we had our greetings, he said, "Auntie, what do you know about God?" Well, I had had some things that I knew plenty. So, I said, "Sit down, let me tell you". So, I began to tell him. Well, he accepted it with open arms, and then he said, "If I bring the girl that I'm going with down here, Peggy", he said, "Would you tell her what you told me?" I said, "Well, of course, if she wanted to hear it". "But she may not care to hear it." "Oh" he said, "She'll want to hear it alright". I thought I knew a little something about that too, but anyway, he brought down an extremely pretty fashionplate all dolled-up in her make-up, you know, very, very blond. She doesn't strike me as being anybody that would be

interested in these things, so I saw that she wasn't and I didn't say anything. Just chatted and let her go. Of course, ultimately it was she that left him in Arizona when I was...so, to his absolute dumbfoundment, she left him and the family--there was one boy, two girls. But, this is not Palm Desert. But I immediately realized that this boy had come home from the marines and he had no place to live. His sister, Helen, her husband had been in the army and they had a very small house rented in Montebello, little family started. And they had given Lee a room. That is, I guess, he slept on the couch or something, and he had a very poor job working with one of his brothers who was Dick, he was the moneymaker of all the boys and he had a big, good job with a wholesale dealer in fruit and vegetables and they operated down in Mexico and all through Imperial Valley and all and at the wholesale house in Los Angeles. And he had a job helping cart the vegetables around or something like this, just a very meager job. And I'm not sure if it was that, but it was something of that sort. It wasn't fit for the job for anything. He wasn't making enough to...so, I said to myself, "My goodness, if I just had another bedroom, I could take this boy in and he could live with me, and then the money that the government gives him, ninety-five dollars, he could get an education; that's what he needs". He knew this by this time and he had sent word home to his younger brother,

Jack , many times--that's before his mother passed--he said, "Tell Jack be sure to get an education first, don't join the army, or don't join the marines, don't join anything until you get your education first". And so, he learned it the hard way but he had learned it, I thought. And so, I just wanted to to this. I lay away all night trying to devise in my mind how I could build on another bedroom that had an entrance that would--a back entrance that he could go and come as he wanted--and a way to get to the bathroom without going through my bedroom. It would have to have a hall, I knew that. And it would have to have a good sized bedroom. I planned it all in my mind, but I didn't see how I was going to do it. So, I had made up my mind that I wouldn't cash the bond, what Steve had left in cash except what was coming in on the dates from United Growers. We had more than enough for our mail order business, so we had sold to United Growers and the money on those was still coming in, small driplets, but still it was cash. So, I thought, "Well, if I could just be sure to get this together, but I guess I'll have to sell a bond". But then I thought, "Well, I'll never have a chance to sell it for a better purpose that I would for that, so I'll just cash a bond and get this". So, by the time Mr. Bolt got there from Redlands, I said, "How much would it cost to add another bedroom?" And told him the necessities of it of a way to get to the bathroom and a

rear entrance from the outside. And he did some figuring and he said it would be about a thousand dollars. Well, the bonds were in thousand-dollar bonds, so I knew I'd just . So, I said, "We'll build that on; please tell your workmen to plan this, lay that out and add this bedroom". So, there I had a two bedroom but it only had one bath. In those days people didn't always have two baths anyway like they do now. So, we did this and I wrote Lee right away and he seemed to be just rejoiced. Then there was a long time I didn't hear from him, but meantime the house was being built and that house was finished before he moved to his other job-- the job where he was going to rehabilitate the mission. And I'd moved up on the mountain and just moved a cot and a few things over in my house from the Woodhouse Ranch to stay there overnight if I wanted to during this, any-time that I would come down during the summer; but I wouldn't expect to stay. And then the following Fall, I began to furnish it and live in it. And the story of my living in Palm Desert, I suppose everybody knows around me. One of my closest neighbors was Christine Markley and Walter that came to the party, you undoubtedly met. And my next door neighbor was May Hanson and May built the Patio Shops there in Palm Desert. And that was the first shopping center on that side of the road was in Palm Desert proper. And, of course, in that beginning the highway was a great cleavage between what was called Palm

Desert and what was called Palm Village. Now this, happily, has all be eradicated. But in the first the Palm Desert was very contemptuous, you might say, almost of their neighbor across the highway. And, of course, Cliff put up the sign, 'Smartest Address in the United States' for Palm Desert and it boomed. They built the Shadow Mountain Club and I had friends that lived in Los Angeles that belonged to the Shadow Mountain Club. And it was through one of them that he came up to the mountain with another friend, Edith Pinkom, who had become a very close friend, lived in Los Angeles; and she had married one of our pioneer...well, he was a prospector, but when you say prospector, it didn't give you a picture of Chester Pinkom because he was a very educated and very fine type of businessman. And, usually, prospectors are...well, my husband loved to prospect and I loved to too. I mean,--and strange to say, so did Chester, but he had taken to a business life later in his career and he was, after his first wife died, Edith then was doing stenographic in this big office building in Los Angeles. And she was doing stenographic work for him and for the man...well, he gave me my membership in the Westerners, Fred Vale. And they came to a pioneer picnic. In the old days we didn't have the Historical Society, we had a Pioneer Society and they were the real pioneers. And they would set their picnic a year ahead... yes, and we had--after my father passed--we renamed the

ranch. Papa had named it the Esperanza, which meant 'hope' and, of course, we had lived in Mexico before that, so were quite familiar with those things as well as... in that part of the valley. And we had so many Mexican people, we couldn't have gotten along without them at all. I don't we what we'd have ever done without them. And so, he had called it the Exparanza. But after father was gone we named it Paul's Pioneer Garden, and Steve's brother-in-law went in with us, bought my brother's share of it. His name was Jerome Burnett. I won't go into that. But when I moved into my new home, which I named Dune Drift, I felt that everything...oh, I looked out those picture windows right up now where the, well, it was right up out of the deep canyon here and all, right towards where the Living Desert is now and all those things.

PY: What street actually was the house on?

NS: It was on just a piece of a street. It was a lane, Peppergrass Lane. There is a Peppergrass Street. It picks it up over on...then a street comes down and cuts it off, then Peppergrass Street is on beyond that as I understand it. But you couldn't recognize my house now because the people that bought it have apparently...I was by there once a year or two later or three years later, and I could see that they had a whole bunch of little children. And they had taken the carport and enlarged it, made it longer and all. And when I looked at it, still

there was just the black tar paper and wire, chicken wire, you know, like getting ready for stucco. So, the place... it was such a cute house before and it was so ruined that I didn't ever want to see it again. It just made me heartsick. I said, "Oh, I wish I'd never seen it this way". Because always I'd held it in my thought as I last saw it and it was charming, and I just couldn't understand their doing this, but I suppose it was a matter of family. Well then, I've been by ~~their~~ there since. I didn't want to go but I didn't know where I was, someone had me in the car. They took me by there and I saw that they had put a whole front on the car with arcades so that you don't even see Dune Drive anymore at all. You just see this big front like a...I don't know if it's a porch or what it is, this arcade. So, that house was really lost in the shuffle, but it was the dearest house and it was so charming. And when I found that I had made an unfortunate investment in trying to get more cash. I didn't have enough money to invest and get anything enough on my principal to live on, and although the bank in Coachella--that was the old Pioneer Bank, I still kept my account there in Coachella and went back and forth for many years, in fact until I sold I went back and forth because I knew the ones that had founded the bank. And until we had that bank in the valley, you couldn't borrow a penny no matter how much land you owned or anything else until we got that bank.

That was the beginning of Coachella Valley of being a financial success, was that bank. And their uncle owned or was head of--I suppose there was something back of him--in Banning, and he founded this branch and put his brother in charge of it. And it was his son that carried on there. And Arthur, the younger boy, had passed on earlier. John, the older one, is there and I guess he still...as far as I knew, he's still there. I've seen him once since I came backin these six years. I just stopped in the bank on another errand and I supposed that he was gone, but he said no, he's in the office, go in and see him. Well, he looked better than he had when I left, so (laughter) he's probably going strong still. Then May Hanson and Bob bought this little adobe that was being built at the other side. They had a lot of money, bought many houses there and sold them or rented them. But they liked adobe. They liked to live in it so most of the time--they were only there part-time--but they would live in the adobe. We got to be very very close friends. In fact, I don't think they ever forgave me for moving away from the desert (laughter). It caused a great rift. And then Bob retired. He always said that this Patio Shops, that was May's investment, not his. He had another thing that he did. And so, she had built...and, of course, Mr. Mullens had leased, I supposed, yes, he must of leased the building, the lease and put in the first drug store. He was there for years

and years and years. And then there was a restaurant right next to him. You could go right inside from one to the other. And Edith Eddy Ward had two of the offices, and a photographer had one, then there's this store had one. And Christine put in a gift shop, Christine's. It's still called that now, there are new people in the gift shop but they had added. May had added more shops in the later time and enlarged so that this was the very nucleus of the whole thing. And there were two streets of those shops around the Patio. And when she gave the opening of the Patio Shop, she made a big thing out of it, a beautiful thing. She had a long, long table there in the patio between the offices and the drug store and had such a spread as you never saw in your life. The most delicious food that you ever...she had a caterer do it all and it was absolutely beautiful. And food. Oh, she had...it was so delicious and some of the elderly codgers that didn't have much of a home, you know, or much food, they would eat as much as they could. And they would sit down. There were chairs on both sides, you know, and they'd sit down and talk for awhile till they could hold a little more. She was the most generous person and she'd just ladle out the punch and cut the cakes and cut the meats. She had all kinds of different meats and, oh, it was simply a beautiful affair. I've always remembered her because it was so lavish. And I don't know what in the world it

cost her, but it was...she was so pleased with what she was doing. She loved the desert. She just took to it, you know, and we took many trips together around. And because I knew the names of the plants and some of the places to go for her to see, why, she felt that I belonged here, that I shouldn't leave. I feel I belong here now.

PY: Is their adobe still around, or was it also so masked over?

NS: I suppose that the adobe is still at the back of this facade or whatever...

PY: No, I don't mean yours, I mean theirs. You said they had one next door.

NS: Oh! I wouldn't remember that. On the corner there was a frame building that was owned...it had four apartments in it, four units, and this belonged to a friend who left, later moved to Mexico. And I visited her there in Guadalajara once. She and May were great friends. And they came to me right after I met them, and I had taken May at least up to the Tors--of course, that's what Frances calls the Schumway Ranch, Frances Rich. She never called it the Tors. She always considered that that was our name for it and it was. But she calls it the Schumway Ranch. And I had taken May up there because I always took people up to my homestead, which I loved so much and the mountain; and she had fallen in love with my house up there. So, she and Mariam had accepted a lot of invita-

tions, and Mariam lived in one of the four apartments, which was very small and May lived in the little adobe, which was very small, and they had accepted all they had accepted all these invitations and they wanted to give a big party, a dinner party, and pay back all these at once. So, May and Mariam came to me and they both were kind of giggling and self-conscious about it, but they said they wanted to ask a favor. And I said, "Well, what is it, what do you want?" I didn't want to promise until they said. And they said, "Well, would you loan us the Tors for a dinner party?" And I said I would gladly but I don't think you realize that the facilities up there are not civilized. I don't have hot water. I don't have a bathroom. I don't have any of these things. "Oh, but you have that beautiful room and that magnificent view and that's all together so different and your furnishing, your fireplace, your floors, your colors, everything is so different, and we'd bring everything up. We'd bring alot of card tables. We'd bring all the food up, all the ice. We'd do all the work. All you have to do is be there." And I said, "Well, of course, I'll do everything I can and I'm very glad to loan you this". So, they did that. Well, it made such a hit that everybody just raved about it. So then, from then on, why the Tors was kind of a place to get together, and we used to have...Oh, we'd put our food all together and take it up there. We'd give a party, or sometimes I gave something.

Usually, it was potluck and everybody brought something or cooked something when they got up there. The holidays like Fourth of July in the hot weather, we'd spend up there. And May, although Bob went back and forth, but May oftened stayed there into the hot season because she had a lot of things to tend to with her rentals and all, the stores and some of the things, there was difficulties like there always is. So, she would stay way into the hot weather, and we always had such nice things going on up there. We formed gradually a little group of people, and most of the...you had in those days when you bought a lot and built, you had to join the Shadow Mountain Club and that was obligatory. And because they didn't want to get certain people in or a certain type, you had to tell your whole history on a sheet a paper, answer all these questions that went clear back into your ancestry. Well, I did all that and, of course, I had to and I was a member. And I said to Carl, "Well, do you always have"...I'm not much for clubs, I'm not a socialite at all and I said, "Do you always have to belong to a club?" "Oh" he said, "you don't always have to but you always will; you'll always want to". Well, he didn't know me because I didn't always want to. But, of course, I had so many friends in it, and May and Bob gave all their parties at the club after that, after it was all going, their big parties. They were very lavish and May would give birthday parties until you were just

ashamed of yourself to have one (chuckle). She heaped things in and she would have a waitress bring in a table all covered with your presents and get the orchestra to play 'Happy Birthday' to you and everything. It kind of flusters me. I'm not used to that kind of partying, but the nice things was about Cliff--and I told this at the foundation meeting of the Palm Desert Historical Society, which we had in the old building there; we had a luncheon or a dinner, it was noontime, it was lunch really--and nobody else seemed to mention this. Now I've thought, "Well, maybe I'm the only one that was present in those days when he used to give for the Pioneers--he called the first residents there, Pioneers, which always amused me because I thought, why, they had electricity, they had everything (laughter), but it interested him to have pioneers. So, he gave this big affair for the pioneers. And for the lady, oh, it was a spread of the most delicious food and it was kind of a brunch. And every lady that came in, an orchid was pinned on her, and there were speeches and there were talks and everything and these were beautiful parties. And you were just invited. There was no obligation. Now, Cliff did that every year for some little time. I guess after the pioneer period was over, why, they quite it, but I was no longer going much then, so. But it was a very nice thing for him to do and I think that everybody enjoyed. May used to give big luncheons and

very nice things there. So, May, I see her very briefly. She was at this first get-together for the...so she's a member of the...yes. I was sorry she didn't get here for this, my Christmas party, but she has these daughters and they both have children. One has just two sons and they're married and have children. And then, the younger daughter, Bobbie, who wasn't married when she first came, she was with her mother and they stayed over there in the adobe, as they always called it, the adobe. And I hadn't made haste to call on them because I saw them going in and out all the time. They had a big station wagon, and I thought they were what I called 'club people (chuckle), and I didn't think they would want

(side 2) to be neighborly particularly, so, I didn't go over there. And then a friend from Clairemont, actually the mother of this friend that was down to see me--her mother's gone now but she was an early friend who used to visit us at the ranch, take a lot of exploring trips with Steve and me and it was a new thing in her life. She was from Evanston, Illinois, and she'd never had anything like this, but she just took to it and, oh, she did so enjoy it. And she used to come down and stay at the ranch with us and then go on some of these trips. So, she came down and she said "Have you called on your neighbors, next door neighbors? And I said, "Oh, no, I don't think that they'd be interested in taking the time". I said, "They're club people and I haven't been

over there". But I said, "I did call out to them once." They were having trouble getting their station wagon started and I thought they didn't have a phone yet, so I called out to them and told them to come over and use my phone if they wanted to...we had just one service station there in Palm Desert then, and I thought, "Well, they'll have to get help". And I said, "If you want to use the phone, just come over and use mine, you're more than welcome". But then I hadn't followed it up with any visiting. But Ann went over there, Mary's mother, and she was so indignant at me because I hadn't. She said I don't think that's very kind of you or very neighborly. And I said, "I guess it isn't, but I just don't think they care about me Ann". And she said, "Of course they would". She said, "They're desert people and now they've moved to the desert; of course they care about it". So, she went over and she came back and she was so triumphant (laughter). "Oh" she said, "she's just a lovely person, she's just in love with the desert. Oh, I told her about you and she's just crazy to talk to you. She wants to know all the names of the plants and she wants to go out and see all these places where you and Steve have taken me, and, why, you must go right over and see her." Well, I didn't do it right away. But one day I went over and May never got over it because... see, I'd worked out in the yard and everything and my hands were terribly rough and I didn't know how to get

them to look like anything and I put on a pair of just white cloth gloves, you know, washable. And I had ironed, well, it was a gray and white dress, summer dress. I put that on. I wasn't dressed up at all, but because I put those gloves on...and May, oh, she never got over it, kidding me about dressing all up to come over and see her. And she said, "My, you just made such an impression, such a perfect lady with her white gloves on". Kidding me, you know (laughter) and she just rubbed it in. But I did find that she was just like Ann said and we just got to be bossom friends. And May, of course, loved gardening and she had these beautiful, she had the most beautiful hands I've ever seen, shaped/and she kept them all scratched up and everything because she had this beautiful garden in the East across the Potomac, a farm. Then the garden clubs were visiting that every year and now she's world president, and she goes to every country in the world, their garden clubs; travels pretty near all the time.

PY: Did she start the one in Palm Desert?

NS: I'm not sure. I don't really know that for certain. I think probably Ann or Christine would now better than I whether she started that. But she still...I saw it in the paper here that she meets with the garden club here and talks. And she bought later a condominium up there in the canyon across from...oh, you know, the ranch, where Firestone lives?

PY: Thunderbird.

NS: Yes, that Thunderbird condominium way up the canyon. And I've been there once, a great big thing it was. And it was in the winter when she gave it...and I had just come for a visit and I got here just ahead of time, in time to go to the party. And, of course, May never feels the cold and I feel all the cold, but everybody was so cold that night, Christy and Walter and Lena and ~~Serria~~ CYRIA Henderson and, of course, Ann and Jane. She gave a beautiful dinner and it was near Christmas yet, all the Christmas decorations and it was a very, very happy... that was the last party that I've been to except the luncheon for the Palm Desert Historical Society business. But she has changed beautifully for me, I mean, she's now more like her old self that she ever has. Maybe she's forgiven me, I don't know, maybe that's why, because she was just warm and so much more like herself. And she used to always...oh, she was so careful of her appearance, she was quite large, beautifully built but large and had to be careful of her diet or was careful of it anyway. And she always was very well corseted and gotten up. And now she looks just nice but she doesn't go to quite such a length so that she seems more appraochable, warmer and happier really, I thought, than she's been since Bob went, because he left such a big estate and it was difficult to administer it. In fact, he made it a corporation and then made her president of

it and all. And I visited her in the East. They bought a big, about three acres, in what was called Philip's Hill in Butler, Pennsylvania, outside of Pittsburgh and it was a mansion of a place and colder in Greenland in May when I visited her. I just couldn't get warm. I couldn't even find a spot of sunlight through all those trees, and the gardener did nothing but rake leaves all day, everyday. And the housekeeper took a little mercy on me, and they had central heating but May never knew that it was cold. And they had a little fireplace, sort of a little study, where it was off to itself and one window where the sun would get in in the morning. I'd go in there and sit in the spot of sunlight with my coat on and do some reading in the morning while May was closeted with the lawyers. She had an office upstairs and she had to stay on the phone on this estate business hour after hour, phoning and phoning and phoning. And she was so troubled, poor girl. I thought, "Oh my, if it takes all this to manage money, it's better not to have it; it's better to just have miracles (laughter) little by little get along". And this is sort of the way my life has gone. I've had enough and I've managed to get some so that now I live on a small income and try to do for my kids, as I call them, nephews and one niece.

PY: Tell me a little more about the Woodhouse Ranch. Where actually is it located.

NS: Well, you wouldn't recognize it now, but it was on the corner of Washington and...oh, what was that other cross street? I can show you pictures of these places. I can't always tell you exactly where they were.

PY: It would be north of...?

NS: Yes, it would be out of Indio and, as you would go to Lake ~~Kowea~~ CAHUILLA--you know, you can go out from Indio out Washington, clear out, and get to Lake ~~Kowea~~ CAHUILLA on that street--but now, from here, we would cut through La Quinta and then turn this way and hit Washington about a mile, about a section, below the old Woodhouse Ranch, which was right on the corner. And if you want to read my article in the old Desert Magazine, "Bolts & Bowls by Woodhouse", and there were pictures of their house...

NY: It's gone now? Is the house gone?

NS: No, it was sold. She sold it after Burt passed, and he had been a homesteader, desert homesteader, and he'd built a small house when he married Kathryn and brought her down to that house. And then this big house, which was sort of a territorial type, it had a veranda upstairs and the bedrooms upstairs. And downstairs there was a living room and a great big kitchen, great old-fashioned type where you ate in part of the kitchen. And then they had like you'd call...well, in the South in Louisiana we'd call it a summer kitchen. I don't knew whether you'd call it a winter kitchen or what, but anyway, they had another stove out there and a lot of things and a half

bath off of it. Because I stayed there so long and was such a close friend, they just took me in like a relative and it made a very great difference to me. It was one of the lovliest things that happened because I was just like one of the family. She loved to entertain and she had very nice things and made a great deal of having things. And their house...Burt, he was really an artist, that's what he was meant to be. He was ingenious and artistic, and their son Dale, too. But they're both married women that liked things. And so Kathryn had to have things and she had them, and Burt, he was a beautiful interior decorator. Their upstairs, their bedroom, their guest room was beautiful, and he'd painted the veranda. I believe there's wild roses or something all around. It was very pretty. And there weren't so many rooms, but they were large and it was a very comfortable house with a nice big fireplace. They were quite musical and we used to have nice parties dancing and singing and all kinds of things. And Kathryn was a very good cook. She liked to cook, she just loved to, and she often, when they were pretty hard up, used to take a winter guest sometimes and that helped along some. But Burt worked, oh, he worked awfully hard.

PY: What did he do?

NS: Painting and decorating.

PY: Did he also make furniture, did I understand?

NS: Well, this is the story. You know the tree here?

People seem to know it better as called the Tamarisk. But the Tamarisk, the variety is a large thing. There is the disiduous tamarisk we have that's called the salt seed , and it's gotten started in all the canyons. And where there's a speck of water I suppose in the years it's been here, the birds and so on have spread it so that everybody thinks of it as just a genuine desert plant, but it isn't at all. It didn't used to be in the canyons. When we first came it wasn't at all, and now it's everywhere. And it grows along the ditches where there's open water along this whitewater ditch, it would grow very thiick, but it's disiduous. But the big variety, the athel wood is the one...it was imported from the deserts of the Old World in about 1915 here, between 1915 and 1916, the government garden there at Indio got a lot of the cuttings in from Arizona. And there it was brought in by Professor Thornburg and started. It was brought here specifically to plant windbreaks because it's very fast growing and it's a water hog, it just drinks water. And the consequence, the wood when it's green, is so soft that you just can sink an axe clear to hell with one blow. But by sort of an accident, Burt discovered, Burt Woodhouse discovered, that the wood when it was properly cured was harder than hickory or ash, and he knew the hard woods in Connecticut--he was a native of Connecticut and his grandfather or father, I'm not

not which, grandfather, I think, was a worker in hard woods and built violins just because he loved to work with those things with hard wood and also as musical. Burt was very musical too. And when he discovered that there was a thing that he had used in his well, a block of wood that you pulled the pulley up on, it was kept wet from the drip, and he discovered that that was as hard, almost as hard as metal. The rope didn't wear it at all, yet, there was this soft wood. And he got so interested and he spent twenty years experimenting in curing. He finally discovered the way to do it. I guessed it passed with him. Maybe Dale knows it, I don't know, he's still here, but he doesn't work in anything like that. He works in a lumber yard. He started in, then after he planted a lot of these, he watered them by hand and, when I was there in my quarters and had a sort of an arrangement. I had leased this little house--he built the bath and dressing room on, then I had the sitting room with a coach, a bed, nicely furnished. And then I had sort of a little courtyard under these great athel trees. Oh, it was just dense shade. And the little car thing that Steve, for us to live in, that he'd bought, I had that drawn up to cook in and eat in. You could make a table or you could also fix two beds. It had an upper bunk and a lower bunk in a way that you could contrive the lower bunk into a seat and have two seats at a little table that you made

with it was contrived. And then I bought a great big cushioned swing in an iron frame for the patio and I had a table out there. And right nearby was a huge cactus in their garden almost as tall as you are, and a cactus had built a magnificent nest in that and, you know, they keep their nest forever. And they clean it up and refurbish it and clean it out and rebuilt it, but they don't make a second nest, they just go living there. They live there summer and winter and all the time. And this cactus frequented by swing and my table there, and I started to make the drapes for the Tors were made out of that cloth--I don't know if they make it anymore at all; it's a cotton material with a very heavy thread that is soft, soft thread and this was kind of oatmeal color--and I was just fringing the ends and I was pulling some of these threads were like this, and I would pile these on the table and the cactus would come over and get one and take it over and weave it into the nest and then come and get another and weave it in. I'd sit there and I just thought, "Well, we're both building our nests in the desert" (laughter). And I had so many wonderful birds up there I watched all the time. We had the water farm, you know. I had the whole, everything from the countryside coming there for water when we had this drought. I had a big bobcat came, and not very often coyotes. The coyotes didn't like the country

up there. See, they eat melons, they eat dates and grapes and all of these things, and also the rabbits aren't thick up there like they are down here. I once or twice had coyotes. Once I had a pair of beautiful ones, stayed up there for quite awhile. But the foxes, I had the gray fox and I had the kit fox. The kit fox is the cutest little animal inthe world and, oh, I was just crazy about him. I have a lot of stories that I'm putting in my book about my wildlife creatures.

PY: Oh, good.

NS: It was a fascinating place to live. No wonder I couldn't do without it.

PY: Let me just ask this. Did Burt Woodhouse ever build actually furniture out of the Tamarisk?

NS: Oh my, yes. Yes, he built the furniture for...the tables for my mountain house.

PY: And are they still there?

NS: Part of them are in there now. My coffee table and my stair step table, and he built these chairs, but in Tuscon I had bought a pecan wood dining table and I had these stained darker to go with that. But they were the same color as the athel wood, and the leather in the seats was a natural shade of just tanned leather. And the furniture that I had made for the house was specially made. I found that up at Idyllwild that this couple were manufacturing out of the native pine that the Forest Service would mark what to take out, and they used that.

I couldn't like any furniture that I wanted for the house, to build it like Steve had built the house. He had designed it and all and it was his own idea and he built a house for the mountain to match the mountain to him. So, I wanted...he was gone before we got to it, but we'd just brought up some odds and ends from the ranch before that. But I wanted to furnish it the way I thought he would like it and it took me pretty near two years to get it done, but I felt so satisfied when I got it done. The story of building the house is a story and that's part of this new story about my mountain, you know, The Mountain of Discovery.

PY: Is some of the furniture still up there?

NS: No, they didn't buy the furniture at all. Irene is a dear, sweet and beautiful person, so is Frances, but Irene, of course, is a product of the city and of Hollywood and of different ideas. And that's one reason she wanted me to stay and just share, to have my house. She'd built and, oh, she made a big point of it, but Frances understand why I couldn't. And I couldn't see all the changes that would come afterwards. It wouldn't have been in my house though because I would have had my house. I suppose this was a weakness in me that, if I had the strength to do it at the time, might have turned out better or it might not. The thing that I thought was that they will feel restricted in

what they do because they feel that it might hurt me to see this change. And, so that on both parts, we both loved each other too much to hurt each other. And so we would be nurishing something all the time that would be in conflict with something (abrupt ending)